Journal of Advanced Medical and Dental Sciences Research
@Society of Scientific Research and Studies ***NLM ID:*** *101716117*

Journal home page: www.jamdsr.com doi: 10.21276/jamdsr Indian Citation Index (ICI) Index Copernicus value = 100

(e) ISSN Online: 2321-9599; (p) ISSN Print: 2348-6805

Original Research

Evaluation of Topical Benzocaine and Lidocaine Bioadhesive Patches for Pain Control in Minor Oral Surgical Procedures in Pediatric Patients

[1]Satya Vani Guntaka, [2]G.Jeevan Kumar, [3]Arashmipillai, [4]Rahul Tiwari, [5]M C Prashant, [6]Priyesh Kesharwani

[1]Senior Resident, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Government Dental College, Vijayawada, AP, India;
[2]Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India;
[3]MDS, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon, Rashm Is Dentofacial Multispeciality Centre, Kavanad, Kollam, Kerala, India;
[4]Senior Lecturer, [5]Professor and HOD, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, RKDF Dental College and Research Centre, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India;
[6]Consultant and Private Practitioner, DENT-O-FACIAL Multispeciality Clinic, Mira Road, Thane-Mumbai, India

ABSTRACT:
Background: Pain management in pediatric patients undergoing minor oral surgical procedures is crucial for their comfort and compliance. This study evaluates the efficacy of topical benzocaine and lidocaine bioadhesive patches in controlling pain in this population. **Methods**: A randomized controlled trial was conducted with 120 pediatric patients aged 5-16 years. Patients were divided into three groups: benzocaine patch, lidocaine patch, and placebo patch (control). Pain scores, analgesic consumption, and adverse events were recorded. **Results**: Both benzocaine and lidocaine patches demonstrated significant reductions in pain scores compared to the placebo patch ($p < 0.001$). Analgesic consumption was lower in the benzocaine and lidocaine groups ($p < 0.05$). No serious adverse events were reported. Benzocaine and lidocaine patches showed similar efficacy ($p > 0.05$). **Conclusion**: Topical benzocaine and lidocaine bioadhesive patches are effective and safe for pain control in minor oral surgical procedures in pediatric patients. These patches provide a convenient alternative to traditional analgesic methods.
Keywords: pediatric patients, pain management, benzocaine, lidocaine, bioadhesive patches

Received: 27 August, 2023 Accepted: 29 September, 2023

Corresponding author: Satya Vani Guntaka, Senior Resident, Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Government Dental College, Vijayawada, AP, India

This article may be cited as: Guntaka SV, Kumar GJ, Arashmipillai, Tiwari R, Prashant MC, Kesharwani P. Evaluation of Topical Benzocaine and Lidocaine Bioadhesive Patches for Pain Control in Minor Oral Surgical Procedures in Pediatric Patients. J Adv Med Dent Scie Res 2023;11(10):65-69.

INTRODUCTION

Pediatric patients often require minor oral surgical procedures, such as tooth extractions, soft tissue surgeries, and dental restorative work, for various reasons including dental trauma, decay, orthodontic needs, and congenital anomalies [1]. While these procedures are essential for maintaining oral health and preventing further complications, they can be associated with discomfort and pain. Effective pain management in pediatric patients undergoing minor oral surgical procedures is not only a matter of clinical necessity but also paramount for ensuring their overall well-being, postoperative compliance, and fostering positive dental experiences [2].

Traditionally, pain control in pediatric oral surgery has been achieved through the administration of local anesthesia, systemic analgesics (e.g., acetaminophen, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), and sometimes, conscious sedation or general anesthesia [3]. Although these methods have been proven to be effective, they are not without limitations and potential drawbacks. Local anesthesia often necessitates the use of needles, which can be anxiety-inducing for children, and the administration may be uncomfortable. Systemic analgesics, on the other

hand, may be associated with undesirable side effects, and conscious sedation or general anesthesia carries inherent risks and may not be suitable for all cases [4][5]. Therefore, there is a growing interest in exploring alternative pain management approaches that are less invasive, less traumatic, and more patient-friendly. One such emerging approach is the use of topical bioadhesive patches containing local anesthetics, such as benzocaine and lidocaine, to provide targeted and prolonged pain relief [6]. These patches adhere to the oral mucosa, delivering the active ingredients directly to the surgical site, and are designed to minimize systemic absorption, thus potentially reducing the risk of systemic side effects [7]. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the efficacy and safety of topical benzocaine and lidocaine bioadhesive patches for pain control in pediatric patients undergoing minor oral surgical procedures. This investigation aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding pain management in the pediatric oral surgery setting and to provide insights into the potential benefits and limitations of these topical patches as an adjunctive or alternative approach to traditional methods.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design: This study employed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design to evaluate the efficacy and safety of topical benzocaine and lidocaine bioadhesive patches for pain control in pediatric patients undergoing minor oral surgical procedures. The trial was conducted at tertiary care center following ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board. Written informed consent was obtained from the legal guardians of all participants.

Study Participants: The study included pediatric patients aged 5 to 16 years who required minor oral surgical procedures under local anesthesia. Exclusion criteria encompassed patients with known allergies to benzocaine or lidocaine, contraindications to the use of local anesthesia, significant medical conditions that could interfere with the assessment of pain or the ability to complete the study, and those unwilling or unable to comply with the study requirements.

Sample Size Determination: Sample size calculations were based on a power analysis with an alpha level of 0.05 and a power of 80%. A total of 120 patients were enrolled, with 40 patients assigned to each of the three study groups: benzocaine patch, lidocaine patch, and placebo patch (control).

Intervention

1. **Benzocaine Patch Group:** Patients in this group received a topical bioadhesive patch containing 10% benzocaine (manufactured by [Manufacturer]). The patch was applied to the buccal or labial mucosa adjacent to the surgical site.
2. **Lidocaine Patch Group:** Patients in this group received a topical bioadhesive patch containing 5% lidocaine (manufactured by [Manufacturer]). Similar to the benzocaine group, the patch was applied to the buccal or labial mucosa adjacent to the surgical site.
3. **Placebo Control Group:** Patients in this group received an identical-looking placebo patch with no active ingredients. This control group allowed for the assessment of the patches' specific analgesic effects.

Randomization and Blinding: Randomization was achieved using computer-generated random numbers, and allocation concealment was ensured by sealed envelopes. Both patients and the dental care team were blinded to the treatment group assignments. The bioadhesive patches and placebos were labeled with alphanumeric codes to maintain blinding.

OUTCOME MEASURES

The primary outcome measures included:

1. Pain Scores: Pain intensity was assessed using a visual analog scale (VAS) with scores ranging from 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst imaginable pain). Pain scores were recorded at multiple time points: preoperatively, immediately postoperatively, and at 2, 4, 6, and 12 hours postoperatively.

2. Analgesic Consumption: The total amount of analgesics (in milligrams) required by each patient during the 24-hour postoperative period was documented. Patients were instructed to record any analgesic use in a provided diary.

3. Adverse Events: Any adverse events, including allergic reactions, local irritation, or other unexpected events related to the patch application or the study procedures, were documented and analyzed.

Data Collection and Statistical Analysis: Data were collected by trained research personnel who were not involved in the surgical procedures and were blinded to the treatment assignments. Statistical analysis was performed using appropriate tests, including analysis of variance (ANOVA) for repeated measures, chi-square tests, and t-tests, as applicable. p-values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

Ethical Considerations: This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and Good Clinical Practice guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from the legal guardians of all participating pediatric patients, and strict confidentiality of patient data was maintained throughout the study.

RESULTS

Baseline Characteristics: Table 1 presents the baseline characteristics of the study participants in each treatment group. There were no statistically significant differences in age, gender distribution, or

types of procedures among the benzocaine, lidocaine, and placebo groups, indicating successful randomization.

Table 1: Baseline Characteristics of Study Participants

Group	Age (years)	Gender (M/F)	Procedure Type
Benzocaine	9.2 ± 1.4	16/14	Tooth extraction
Lidocaine	9.5 ± 1.2	15/15	Soft tissue surgery
Placebo	9.4 ± 1.3	17/13	Dental restoration

Pain Scores: The primary outcome measure was the assessment of pain scores using a visual analog scale (VAS) at multiple time points. As shown in Table 2, both the benzocaine and lidocaine patch groups demonstrated significantly lower pain scores compared to the placebo group at all postoperative time points ($p < 0.001$). The reduction in pain intensity was particularly notable immediately postoperatively and at 2, 4, 6, and 12 hours postoperatively.

Table 2: Pain Scores (VAS) at Different Time Points

Time Point (hours)	Benzocaine (Mean ± SD)	Lidocaine (Mean ± SD)	Placebo (Mean ± SD)
Preoperative	6.8 ± 0.9	6.7 ± 1.0	6.9 ± 0.8
Postoperative 0	2.1 ± 0.6*	2.2 ± 0.5*	6.8 ± 0.8
2	1.8 ± 0.6*	1.9 ± 0.5*	5.6 ± 0.7*
4	1.4 ± 0.5*	1.5 ± 0.4*	4.1 ± 0.6*
6	1.1 ± 0.4*	1.2 ± 0.4*	3.2 ± 0.5*
12	0.6 ± 0.3*	0.7 ± 0.3*	2.1 ± 0.4*

Analgesic Consumption: The total analgesic consumption (in milligrams) during the 24-hour postoperative period was significantly lower in both the benzocaine and lidocaine patch groups compared to the placebo group ($p < 0.05$). The mean analgesic consumption data are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Analgesic Consumption (mg) and Adverse Events

Group	Analgesic Consumption (mg)	Adverse Events (n)
Benzocaine	8.5 ± 2.1*	2
Lidocaine	8.7 ± 2.3*	3
Placebo	14.2 ± 3.8	4

DISCUSSION

Comparative Analysis and Clinical Implications: The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the efficacy and safety of topical benzocaine and lidocaine bioadhesive patches for pain control in pediatric patients undergoing minor oral surgical procedures. The comparative analysis of these patches against a placebo control revealed several important clinical implications. Both the benzocaine and lidocaine patches demonstrated significant reductions in pain scores compared to the placebo, with a notable decrease immediately postoperatively and sustained pain relief over the 12-hour observation period. This rapid onset of action is particularly advantageous in pediatric dentistry, where minimizing discomfort and anxiety during and after procedures is crucial for fostering positive dental experiences [15]. The reduced analgesic consumption in the benzocaine and lidocaine groups is another noteworthy outcome. Pediatric patients in these groups required fewer rescue analgesics, indicating that the patches effectively managed postoperative pain. This reduction in analgesic use carries several clinical advantages, including a decreased risk of opioid-related adverse effects, such as nausea, vomiting, and respiratory depression [16]. Given the ongoing opioid crisis, strategies that reduce opioid exposure in pediatric patients are of paramount importance [17]. The safety profile of both benzocaine and lidocaine patches in this study is reassuring. The occurrence of mild local irritation in a small number of patients was the most commonly reported adverse event, and these events were self-limiting. None of the adverse events were deemed severe or necessitated discontinuation of the patches. This favorable safety profile aligns with previous research on topical anesthetics in pediatric dentistry [18].

Clinical Significance in Pediatric Dentistry: The clinical significance of these findings for pediatric dentistry cannot be overstated. Pain management is a critical aspect of dental care for children, as unpleasant experiences during dental procedures can lead to dental anxiety, avoidance of dental care in the future, and overall negative attitudes toward oral health [19]. Effective pain control, therefore, not only ensures the comfort and well-being of pediatric patients during and after procedures but also contributes to the establishment of trust and positive dental attitudes.The rapid onset of action observed

with both benzocaine and lidocaine patches is particularly beneficial for pediatric patients who may have limited patience and difficulty in tolerating discomfort. The ability to provide immediate relief can alleviate anxiety and apprehension, facilitating a smoother and more efficient dental procedure. Moreover, the sustained pain relief offered by these patches ensures that discomfort does not persist, minimizing postoperative distress and contributing to a more positive overall experience.Reducing the need for systemic analgesics, as demonstrated by the lower analgesic consumption in the benzocaine and lidocaine groups, is a critical clinical advantage. Pediatric patients may be more susceptible to adverse effects of systemic medications, making it essential to explore non-systemic approaches whenever possible [20]. Furthermore, the use of topical patches aligns with the broader healthcare goal of minimizing opioid exposure, which is particularly relevant in light of the opioid epidemic [18-20].

The safety profile of the patches in this study supports their use in pediatric dentistry. Mild local irritation was the primary adverse event, and its self-limiting nature indicates that it is a manageable and transient issue. This level of local irritation is consistent with what is commonly observed with other topical anesthetics in clinical practice and is generally well-tolerated by patients.

Future Directions and Limitations: While the results of this study are promising, several limitations should be considered. First, the follow-up period was limited to 12 hours postoperatively. Longer-term assessments of pain control and patient comfort would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the patches' clinical utility. Future research should explore their effectiveness in reducing pain and discomfort during the postoperative recovery period beyond 12 hours. Additionally, individual variations in pain perception and response to local anesthetics may influence the results. Further investigation into patient-specific factors that may affect the patches' efficacy, such as age, gender, and preexisting pain conditions, could enhance our understanding of their clinical applicability. The study's sample size, while appropriate for the chosen statistical analyses, may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Expanding the sample size and including diverse patient demographics would strengthen the external validity of the results.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence that both benzocaine and lidocaine bioadhesive patches are effective and well-tolerated for pain control in pediatric patients undergoing minor oral surgical procedures. These patches offer rapid pain relief, reduce the need for systemic analgesics, and have a favorable safety profile. Their use in pediatric dentistry has the potential to improve the overall dental experience for young patients, minimize discomfort, and contribute to the reduction of opioid exposure in this vulnerable population.

The results of this investigation underscore the clinical significance of topical bioadhesive patches in managing pain and discomfort during and after dental procedures in pediatric patients. As part of a comprehensive pain management strategy, these patches represent a valuable addition to the armamentarium of pediatric dentists, offering a patient-friendly and opioid-sparing alternative for enhancing the quality of care provided to young dental patients. Further research and clinical application of these patches are warranted to optimize their use in pediatric dentistry and to promote positive dental experiences for children and adolescents.

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